

A Study in Regional Strategy: The Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conferences

F. R. ROFF, JOHANNSON

We think that this is the time — and timing is important — and this is the place for the new frontier and the northern vision; because if ever there was a place that needed planned growth and millions of dollars in expenditure, it is northern B.C., the Yukon, and Alaska. . . . The time for action is now, not ten years from now! Last week the Russian ambassador told me in a very clear way, that in the part of Russia opposite us, Russia is spending 40 per cent of all its money on development. Canada cannot sit by and see that great economic development take place without matching it with more than words.¹

What are we doing here? We are here to rediscover a section of the North American continent apparently undiscovered by Washington and Ottawa. We are not concerned with international boundaries here.²

Between 1960 and 1964, the governments of Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon Territory met in three formal conferences on the subject of economic development. These Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon conferences (hereafter A-BC-Y) can be seen as a study in regional strategy. The principal actors — Alaska and British Columbia — sought projects which, if carried out, would have directly affected Canadian-American relations.³ However, as the above quotations from B.C. leaders illustrate, the basic purpose of the sessions was to focus the

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¹ Opening remarks of Premier W. A. C. Bennett to the second Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, Juneau, Alaska, 30 June 1960, as reproduced in Ronald B. Worley, *The Wonderful World of W. A. C. Bennett* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 232.

² W. D. Black, B.C. Provincial Secretary, "Remarks" to the third A-BC-Y conference, Whitehorse, Yukon, 10 September 1964. Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, Minutes (Whitehorse: Queen's Printer, 1964), p. 2.

³ Yukon Territory representatives at the conferences were well aware of their status as federal government appointees, unlike the elected officials from Alaska and British Columbia. Accordingly, the Yukon delegates prefaced their remarks at each conference by noting that the Territorial representatives were present only to listen, learn all possible development, inform the Canadian government of plans, and not to expound policy. In particular, see First Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, Minutes (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1960), p. 5. Such a position revealed that the major participants were Alaska and British Columbia.

U. G. Simons (Canada) 1073776

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BY JONATHAN

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What are we doing here? We are here to rediscover a section of the North American continent apparently undiscovered by Washington and Ottawa. We are not concerned with international boundaries here.²

Between 1960 and 1964, the governments of Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon Territory met in three formal conferences on the subject of economic development. These three Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon conferences (hereafter A-BC-Y) can be seen as a study in regional strategy, for the two principal actors — Alaska and British Columbia — sought projects which, if carried out, would have directly affected Canadian-American relations.³ However, as the above quotations from B.C. leaders illustrate, the basic purpose of the sessions was to focus the

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² W. D. Black, B.C. Provincial Secretary, "Remarks" to the third A-BC-Y conference, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, 15 September 1964. Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes* (Whitehorse: Queen's Printer, 1964), p. 9.

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attention of the two federal governments on the perceived needs of the region, and thereby to influence domestic priorities and planning. In short, by acting in the international arena, the local governments hoped to create a climate in which the Canadian and U.S. governments would be forced to undertake development programmes for the whole region. While the conferences did not achieve their objectives, the failure is of less importance than the fact that the local governments could share such a goal, and work in concert to influence domestic policies.

While the details of these conferences represent an era of British Columbia's history, they should be viewed in a wider framework, that of the expanding international activities of Canadian provincial governments. The issues considered at the A-BC-Y conferences are illustrative of matters which tend to create provincial interests in international affairs. As examined elsewhere in considerable detail, provincial activity in the international sector — particularly with the United States — emanates from constitutional authority over subjects which transcend national boundaries.⁴ In the period under consideration in this paper, the early 1960s, the British Columbia government's major interest in the northern half of the province can be summarized as the "economic development" of a frontier territory. Constitutionally, this matter is within provincial jurisdiction; the fact that propinquitous regions — Alaska and the Yukon — had similar needs led to considerations of joint approaches to problem resolution. This reality meant that the international arena could be utilized by local governments in an attempt to influence domestic affairs, which is where the true significance of these conferences must ultimately be considered.

The following pages are devoted to an examination of the A-BC-Y conferences. Included is a review of the historical background to the meetings, an overview of the issues which were discussed, the results, and a consideration of the participants, with a view to illuminating the nature of interests which create provincial government involvement in international matters.

⁴ The authority granted the provinces under section 92 of the British North America Act covers a wide number of issues which effectively transcend national boundaries, although the spirit of the constitution was to limit provincial jurisdiction to purely local matters.

For a discussion of the manner in which this authority has been used in developing international activities, see Richard H. Leach, Donald E. Walker, Thomas Allen Levy, "Province-State Trans-Border Relations: A Preliminary Assessment", *Canadian Public Administration* 16 (Fall 1973), pp. 468-482, for a general survey. For a specific examination of one province, see my dissertation: "British Columbia's Inter-Governmental Relations with the United States" (Baltimore: Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1975).

The Conferences

Consideration of the development of Alaska, northern British Columbia and the Yukon did not begin in 1960; nor was that the first time that the local governments had combined to study common needs. However, the A-BC-Y meetings did represent the first time that the local governments dealt with a general subject such as economic development, as opposed to particular issues such as highway planning.⁵ Some of the earlier studies and joint projects which influenced the A-BC-Y conferences can be briefly noted, although a detailed consideration of these earlier activities is obviously beyond the scope of this paper. During the 1930s, several different studies were commissioned to consider possible highway and air routes to link Alaska with the "lower forty-eight".⁶ While these various studies did not result in concrete action, they laid the basis for projects which were undertaken in the region during World War II. With the Japanese invasion of two of the Aleutian Islands, U.S. attention to the defence requirements of Alaska was heightened, and several projects in Canada were undertaken with U.S. money and manpower. The first product of this U.S. attention was the improvement of the Canadian air route to the Yukon, which became known as the Northwest Staging System. A service road was built to connect the airfields on this route and, at the same time, to provide overland contact with Alaska — this was the Alaska Highway. A related development was the construction of a pipeline and refinery system, to provide aviation fuel for the Northwest Staging System from the oil fields at Norman Wells, in the Northwest Territories — this was the Canol Project. The U.S. Army also undertook a survey of a possible railway between Alaska and the U.S. which would

⁵ The desire to provide transportation links between the southern and northern regions of British Columbia runs throughout the political history of the provinces. Witness the troubled history of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, now known as British Columbia Rail; see Bruce Ramsay, *P.G.E.: Railway to the North* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1962). Other efforts were made to build a north-south highway system; see S. W. Jackman, *Portraits of the Premiers* (Sidney: Gray's Publishing, 1969), p. 212, for the efforts of Premier Tolmie in the 1920s, and Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 464-466, for details of Premier Pattullo's efforts during the 1930s. The latter led to a joint study by British Columbia, Alaska, and the Yukon, which reported in 1941. See references to "British Columbia-Yukon-Alaska Highway Commission (Canada)" in Charles Camsell (ed.), *Canada's New Northwest: The North Pacific Planning Project* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1948), p. 115.

⁶ The earlier studies are reviewed in *Ibid.*, pp. 115-120, and in Battelle Memorial Institute, *An Integrated Transport System to Encourage Economic Development of Northwest North America* (Columbus, Ohio: Battelle Memorial Institute, 1960), II, pp. 1-2.

tie into existing railways in B.C.⁷ In 1943, the U.S.-Canadian Joint Economic Committee began a joint study of the entire region; by 1944, the Japanese had abandoned their Aleutian bases, and U.S. attention was diverted from the region; the railway survey was not pursued, nor was U.S. interest in the Joint Economic Committee survey.⁸ The end of the war brought the end of any sense of emergency, and most of the wartime projects were abandoned, which meant the region gained little in the way of permanent economic infrastructure as a result of the wartime experience.⁹ The early years of the Cold War brought renewed interest in

⁷ Camsell (ed.), *Canada's New Northwest*, pp. 40-44, 125-127. For detailed studies of U.S. wartime activities in the region, see Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *United States Army in World War II: The Framework of Hemispheric Defense* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 390-399, and Col. Stanley W. Dziuban, *United States Army in World War II: Military Relations Between the United States and Canada, 1939-1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), pp. 225-230.

One of the developments, the Canol Project, has re-appeared in an unusual fashion. The project comprised a pipeline and refinery to supply petroleum to Alaska from Norman Wells, N.W.T.; it was completed in 1944, and abandoned after the war. An Edmonton businessman who has bought control of companies which were sold rights to the Canol Project after the war, has claimed rights to huge tracts of land in the area as a result of his purchase of the firms. *Vancouver Sun*, 29 March 1975, p. 20.

⁸ The Joint Economic Survey, which was announced in January 1943, was to survey an area of a million square miles, which included Alaska, the Yukon, northern British Columbia and Alberta, with an eye to post-war development of the region on a joint basis. *New York Times*, 25 January 1943, p. 1. Such a possibility was heralded as a shining hope for the future world, which would feature less emphasis on political boundaries, which would likely remain, as they are "... convenient, and they have their sentimental values. But the cooperative project outlined may foreshadow a new kind of relationship, and one that may be imitated elsewhere on the globe. Economic areas do not always run with political areas. Friendly adjoining governments may be able to overcome this difficulty, to the general advantage. Political boundary lines may simply become less important." *New York Times*, Editorial, 26 January 1943, p. 18.

The official report on the Canadian part of the survey, which was continued after the war, noted that future planning for the region would require joint undertakings, and expressed regret about the U.S. decision to abandon the survey. Camsell (ed.), *Canada's New Northwest*, p. 23.

⁹ A U.S. survey of the area's needs in 1942, noting that an earlier plan to provide telegraph links from North America through Alaska and Russia had been abandoned, stressed that the wartime projects should be built with an eye to permanent requirements. "The transportation problem which so long has handicapped the economic growth of the area, will not be completely solved by new construction. However, the needs of the war are resulting in millions of dollars being invested in improvements to the transportation routes of the area. These may be sufficient, if put to effective use in the post-war period, to bring in their wake a considerable development of many of the resources all the way from the Columbia River to Alaska." Benjamin H. Kizer, "The North Pacific Planning Project" (Mimeo: Paper presented to the Eighth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, December 1942), p. 5.

the defence of Alaska from both private and official groups interested in railway connections between Alaska and the lower forty-eight, but specific projects were not forthcoming.¹⁰ By the 1950s, therefore, numerous studies had been made which had identified most of the conceivable infrastructure possibilities, but there was not a driving impetus — such as is provided by a war — to develop these projects.

A U.S. study of the region which began in the late 1950s can be seen as a motivating factor behind the A-BC-Y conferences. Congress in 1956 established the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission to study additional transportation facilities required to connect Alaska with the lower forty-eight states. A major component of this study was identification of available natural resources in the area, and possible transportation systems required to exploit them; this aspect of the commission's work was turned over to the Battelle Memorial Institute, which made its final report in 1960. The Battelle study revealed the range of subjects which were later discussed by the A-BC-Y conferences, and is therefore worth reviewing in detail.¹¹

An important feature of the Battelle recommendations was that it did not take into account strategic military factors as justification for transportation facilities, and based its projections on resources that were known to exist at the time of the study. The Battelle findings can be summarized in point-form:

In spite of these urgings, nearly all the wartime projects were abandoned. The Canol Project could not compete with tanker-borne fuel from California; the refinery was dismantled after functioning for a year, the Norman Wells oilfield was not developed, and the Canol Road was abandoned (though later partially rebuilt). The railway project was not pursued. Only the Alaska Highway remained, though its improvement was not undertaken for many years. Camsell (ed.), *Canada's New Northwest*, p. 42.

¹⁰ Largely through the efforts of Washington State politicians, acting on behalf of constituents who sought to build a railway to Alaska, Congress empowered President Truman to initiate discussions with Canada about such a project. However, such discussions were not forthcoming, as the Permanent Joint Board on Defence had already reviewed the subject, and concluded that a railway to Alaska was not a priority issue. P.J.B.D. *Minutes*, 19-20 February 1948.

¹¹ The Battelle study included all of Alaska (except the Peninsula and the Aleutians), the Yukon, the Northwest Territories to 120° W., the northwest quarter of Alberta, and the northern half of British Columbia. The study was to consider existing and planned transport facilities, the location of resources which might be developed by additional transportation, possible markets for existing and new resources, new transport routes which could be developed (including projected construction costs), and the feasibility of building new transport systems, between 1960 and 1980. The study was based largely on previous studies, and interviews of local government officials in the region. Battelle Memorial Institute, *An Integrated Transport System*, II, pp. 2-6.

- Tourism will be the most important single contributor to the area's economy by 1980. This will require improvement of road systems, accommodations, and joint tourist promotion programmes.
- Petroleum reserves are not yet clearly established; oil could become a profitable industry when the world oil supply is reduced to meet demand; B.C. natural gas will supply the U.S. Pacific Northwest region, but it is doubtful that Alaskan supplies will be needed for more than local use before 1980.
- Forestry in B.C. will depend on improved interior transportation systems, but in Alaska most development will be near the coast and will not require major new transportation facilities.
- Metal and mineral deposits in the area are either of too low a grade or too small in quantity to warrant immediate development.
- Hydro-electric power potential is very large in the region, but does not have sufficient markets to warrant development.
- Agriculture is more hampered by climate conditions than by the lack of a good transportation system.¹²

Accordingly, the Battelle study did not suggest many economic factors which would require immediate development of major transportation facilities, concluding:

In general, analyses of the major resources in the Area indicate that, except for timber, oil, and gas in British Columbia and Alberta, development based on known resources will occur over the next 20 years in areas along or close to the coast. This is true for metals and minerals, forests, coal, oil and gas, and fish. If major freight movements result from future discoveries of mineral resources in regions back from the coast in Alaska, Yukon Territory, and in northwestern British Columbia, these could be handled most economically by shipping to the coast over the shortest possible route available at that time and thence to market by water transport. Tourism is thus the only major economic-development potential in the Area that would benefit substantially from major new or improved land-transport linkages between Alaska and the southern forty-eight states.¹³

The study went on to outline those highway facilities that should be developed to improve the tourist trade, and recommended that the U.S. government initiate diplomatic discussions with Canada to facilitate an integrated highway development programme, as well as recommending that the local authorities undertake joint promotional activities to aid

¹² *Ibid.*, I, pp. 2-16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 16.

tourism.¹⁴ Additional factors — principally military interests — influenced the final report of the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission, which supported the Battelle study's suggestion for diplomatic negotiations, but went further, to recommend that direct rail and highway links between Alaska and the lower forty-eight states were justified.¹⁵ The findings and recommendations of both the Battelle and Congressional studies were to be factors in the A-BC-Y conferences.

Issues which were raised at the conferences resulted from the perceived interests of the local governments, and these are worth considering at this point. The problems facing the whole region were well summarized in an earlier study, which noted that if

... the northern part of the area has been held down in a vicious circle of under-development (scanty population, inadequate transportation routes,

¹⁴ The Battelle Report recommended a number of highway developments: (a) upgrading and hard-surfacing of the Canadian portion of the Alaska Highway; (b) construction of a hard-surfaced road from Hazelton (Route 5) to Jakes Corner in the Yukon; (c) upgrading and hard-surfacing of the Haines Cutoff road; (d) construction of a hard-surface highway from Petersburg to Route 5 via the Iskut River Valley; (e) construction of a road to link Atlin (Route 5) with Juneau, Alaska. The report recommended that Alaska and Canadian agencies develop a "planned and integrated program" to attract tourists, including "coordinated promotional activities." *Ibid.*, I, p. 26.

Premier Bennett had been hoping for a more extensive transport system. Researchers conducting studies for the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission had visited Victoria in 1957 and, according to press reports, B.C. had suggested three options to link Alaska with the southern forty-eight states through B.C.: (a) improving existing ties, by paving the Alaska Highway; (b) construction of a railway linking the Alaskan Railway with the PGE; (c) development of a highway between Terrace and Atlin, using portions of the Stewart-Cassiar Road. *Victoria Daily Times*, 7 November 1957, p. 2. Of these options, Premier Bennett favoured the second, as it matched the development plans the province was pursuing. The Battelle Report, which did not support Bennett's plans for railway construction, was a source of considerable embarrassment to the Premier during the 1960 election campaign. Paddy Sherman, *Bennett* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 233.

¹⁵ The following recommendations were made in the final report of the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission, 25 May 1961: (a) Negotiations with Canada should be initiated to develop a co-ordinated water, rail and highway system for the area, which is required on economic, civil defence and military grounds; (b) specific projects to be considered in such negotiations include: (i) improvement of Merchant Marine facilities; (ii) establishment of an all-rail service between Alaska and the lower forty-eight states, by connecting the Alaska Railway with the Canadian railway system; (iii) hard-surfacing of a Hazelton-Atlin-Alaska border highway, based on parts of the existing Stewart-Cassiar road; (iv) construction of feeder highways from the Hazelton-Atlin-Alaska boundary road to Petersburg-Wrangell and Juneau; (v) relocation of the Haines Cut-off, so as to make it a year-round road; (vi) upgrading and paving of the Alaska Highway. Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission, Press Release, July (no date) 1961.

high cost of living, etc.) then it is entirely possible that the circle will have been cut by the provision of a vastly more adequate transportation system.¹⁶

Another study stressed the fact that more than physical barriers were involved in creating problems for the area:

Alaska is an economic island. . . . While geographic features have had their effect on its isolation, the trade policies of both the United States and Canada have been far more effective in limiting economic intercourse than any mountain barrier and have thereby confirmed its economic insularity.¹⁷

In summary, the region's basic need for economic development was severely hampered by the lack of an effective transportation system; this problem was exacerbated by regulations which restricted even local trade from flourishing.

From these general statements, it is possible to outline specific perceived interests of the local governments. Alaska's objectives can be summarized as follows: (i) direct transportation links with the lower forty-eight states; (ii) improved internal and regional transportation; (iii) changes in national regulations to allow more regional trade; (iv) power supplies to facilitate economic development, particularly in the Panhandle; (v) funds for economic development projects.¹⁸ British Columbia's perceived interests were similar: (i) an improved internal transportation system, with particular emphasis on railway connections to the north, either by the provincially owned Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE — now the British Columbia Railway), or else by new privately owned railways; (ii) access rights across the Panhandle, to permit economic development in B.C.'s northwestern quadrant; (iii) changes in regulations — particularly the Jones Act — to foster inter-regional trade; (iv) markets for possible hydro-electric projects; (v) funds for economic development.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kizer, "The North Pacific Planning Project", p. 5.

¹⁷ Camsell (ed.), *Canada's New Northwest*, p. 9.

¹⁸ In addition to the need for improved transportation, Alaska also was vitally interested in finding sources of power for the Panhandle region, which lacks potential power sites itself, while geographic features prevent construction of transmission facilities from central Alaska. The Panhandle region, if it had adequate power supplies, could be a major growth region, because of available natural resources and port facilities. On the B.C. side of the border, there are a number of possible hydro-electric projects which could be developed, and by following river outlets to the Pacific, the transmission lines could provide such power. The potential joint development of these projects was clearly to Alaska's interest. Interview with V. Raudsepp, former Deputy Minister of Water Services, B.C. Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, 17 December 1973.

¹⁹ British Columbia's interest in co-operative ventures with Alaska centred on the Panhandle. The region remained a sore point for many British Columbians after

The Yukon's perceived interests were equally similar: (i) an improved transportation system; (ii) development of possible hydro-electric projects; (iii) funds for economic development.²⁰ Many of these needs could be attained by joint projects, as the interests of the local governments appeared more complementary than competing; thus the idea of joint discussions of possibilities seemed worthy of consideration.

The decision to hold the 1960 A-BC-Y conference was not a sudden development; the local governments had made suggestions for such meetings far in advance of the first session. In 1954, Premier Bennett met informally with the federally appointed Alaska Territorial Governor to discuss common interests.²¹ By 1956, the B.C. Premier had identified two specific subjects that required joint activities with Alaska: access across the Panhandle, and planning to build the PGE to the Alaska border.²² Alaska's

the settlement of the Alaska Boundary Dispute at the turn of the century, and as possible economic development of the area was considered, the need for access to port facilities was obvious. R. W. Bonner, Attorney-General and Minister of Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce, as well as Minister of Commercial Transport (at different times, 1952-1968), made numerous comments on the importance of access across the Panhandle to B.C. These ranged from facetious remarks to the effect that the problems would be solved if the Panhandle were to become a part of B.C., *The Province* (Vancouver), 13 March 1958, p. 3, to more serious comments to the effect that the future development and prosperity of northwestern B.C. would depend on some kind of co-operation with Alaska; *Vancouver Sun*, 27 May 1966, p. 7.

The Jones Act required that transportation of goods between U.S. ports be carried by U.S. vessels and crew.

²⁰ The Yukon Territorial Commissioner noted that the Yukon held crucial ground as a "buffer state" between Alaska and British Columbia, as future developments of transportation and tourism would automatically involve developments in the Yukon. Commissioner F. H. Collins, Second Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, p. 14.

²¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 1 November 1954, p. 1.

²² In addressing a meeting of the Pacific Northwest Trade Association (PNWTA), Premier Bennett linked the issues of development of the Columbia River to B.C.'s needs in the northwest: "As a Government, we must safeguard vital interests of our people, and we must assure that adequate supplies of power are available for our own present and future requirements. However, we are also fully aware of the needs and requirements of our good friends to the south insofar as power is concerned, just as I am sure that they are cognizant of our needs, for example, of an outlet to the Pacific through the Alaska Panhandle. If the interests of both parties are understood, then certainly a mutually satisfactory arrangement can be reached." *Vancouver Province*, 15 May 1956, p. 1.

On the subject of railway construction, Bennett frequently noted that the natural terminus for the PGE was the Alaska border. He made numerous proposals for ways to attain that objective, including joint ownership of the portion of the line that passed through the Yukon, and ultimately, that the Yukon join B.C. to make construction possible. See his comments, of which the following are representative: *Vancouver Sun*, 6 July 1956, p. 19; *Ibid.*, 30 August 1956, p. 55; *Ibid.*, 8 December 1956, p. 10.

initial response was one of interest, hindered only by its status as a territory, but this problem was overcome after 1958, when Alaska's future statehood led to suggestions for joint meetings.²³ If a single event can be indicated as fostering the conferences, a speech by Alaskan Governor Egan in Kitimat, B.C., in 1959 must be noted; his remarks evoked official comments from B.C. leaders, which led directly to the first A-BC-Y conference in Victoria, in July 1960.²⁴ B.C. had a long-standing interest in discussing joint projects with Alaska, and when the territory was granted statehood, the new government called for exploration of possible programmes. The Yukon was included in the conferences for a number of

²³ Alaskan Governor Michael Stepovich admitted an interest in dealing with B.C., particularly on the matter of extending the PGE, but recognized that the territory had no authority to act on such matters, and could only pass information and recommendations along to the U.S. government. *Vancouver Sun*, 25 July 1957, p. 15.

The decision to grant statehood to Alaska was welcomed in B.C. Premier Bennett noted that the decision would be "very good for the PGE", and Attorney-General Bonner claimed that B.C.'s position as a "land bridge" between Alaska and the lower forty-eight states would provide benefits for B.C.'s transportation needs. *Vancouver Sun*, 2 July 1958, p. 3. Premier Bennett promised to invite the new Alaskan Governor to Victoria for discussions, once Alaska was a state. *Victoria Daily Times*, 31 July 1958, p. 17. A series of letters then passed between Bennett and Governor-elect Egan, in which one of the proposals was the establishment of a joint commission to study an exchange of territory; some B.C. spokesmen were suggesting trading the Mount Fairweather corner of B.C. for an access corridor across the Panhandle. *Victoria Daily Times*, 13 May 1959, p. 31.

²⁴ Governor Egan suggested that Alaska and B.C. should consider a number of joint projects which would be mutually beneficial: co-operative development of power projects, location of new industries, and joint access across the Panhandle, to give Alaska access to the B.C. transportation system, while providing B.C. access to Alaskan tidewater ports. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 26 August 1959, p. 1. Attorney-General Bonner played down the suggestion that the issues of an access corridor and power for the Panhandle should be linked, favouring "co-operation to bargaining". *The Province*, 27 August 1959, p. 36. Premier Bennett welcomed the suggestion that talks be held, but said that no formal arrangements for such meetings had been made. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 28 August 1959, p. 1. Speaking in Alaska to a PNWTA meeting, Bonner later outlined six possible routes through B.C. that might be of interest to Alaska in co-ordinating transport systems. *The Province*, 5 September 1959, p. 7. Clearly, the interest in discussions was growing, as evidenced by the emergence of positions by the two local governments.

An interesting sidelight to the development of the three A-BC-Y conferences is the role played by private interests in bringing the parties together. Each of the major statements on the issue of possible co-operative projects, from Premier Bennett's remarks in 1956 (see footnote 22), to Governor Egan's suggestions and Bonner's response, were made at meetings of boards of trade or business associations. The central agency in this regard was the Pacific Northwest Trade Association, which "... had an interest in identifying investment opportunities for growth and development on both sides of the border, and by way of their discussions, in attracting people who might be interested in taking up these opportunities. ... At conferences of that sort, the sponsors tried to get a group of people on the official side, who might be of some help or interest, and it was on that basis that I was invited, as was Governor Egan." Interview with R. W. Bonner, 25 February 1974.

reasons: it faced the same problems, and joint projects might logically include the Yukon, which because of its territorial status provided a conduit to the Canadian federal government, a potential source of funding such efforts. In short, the conferences emerged from the perceived common needs and interests of the local governments, which sought avenues through which to attain their own objectives.

The first A-BC-Y conference, in Victoria, 19-20 July 1960, was essentially exploratory in nature: basic planning alternatives were outlined by each party, as a means of identifying possible programmes for co-ordination or joint activity. In part, this was because the Battelle Commission study for the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission was still underway. The discussion at the meeting was thus limited to information exchanges. Alaska's Commissioner of Public Works, R. A. Downing, presented a brief on transportation which contained a list of proposed inter-connections with B.C., as well as subjects which required joint U.S.-Canadian action. Some of the latter included:

- (a) Easement of border-crossing regulations for aircraft.
- (b) Joint efforts to promote tourism in the region.
- (c) Direct liaison between the highway location branches of the three governments.
- (d) Consideration of possible hydro-electric power developments on international rivers in the region.²⁵

British Columbia's Minister of Highways, P. A. Gaglardi, outlined existing and planned transportation services in B.C., including some projects which were relevant to possible inter-connections with Alaska.²⁶ A second

²⁵ Downing proposed a list of specific inter-connections between Alaskan and B.C. transportation systems: (a) Cordova, Alaska to the Alaska Highway, near Koidern, Yukon; (b) Skagway to Carcross road; (c) Juneau to Atlin, following the Taku River; (d) Petersburg to Cassiar-Stewart Highway, via the Iskut River valley; (e) Ketchikan to the Cassiar-Stewart Road via the Unuk River; (f) a Marine Highway from Prince Rupert to Haines. First Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 5-6.

²⁶ Gaglardi discussed planned projects in B.C.: (a) the Cassiar-Stewart Highway, which would join the Alaska Highway near Watson Lake by 1964; (b) the establishment of a ferry system linking Port Hardy (on northern Vancouver Island) with Kitimat; (c) the privately-owned Pacific Northern Railway, which would link Prince George with the Yukon border. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

Gaglardi's proposals were similar to those which were later promoted by the Vancouver Board of Trade. That group was anxious to see: (a) establishment of a railway in northern B.C. to gain access to timber; (b) a Hazelton-Atlin highway; (c) joint financing — with Alaska — of new transport systems in B.C.; (d) promotion of tourism for the northern part of B.C. as a means of supporting new highway developments. Northwest Development Committee, Vancouver Board of Trade, "Report on Northern B.C. Resource Development" (Vancouver Board of Trade, Mimeo, 1960), pp. 8-11.

B.C. brief was presented by an engineering consultant for the proposed Pacific Northern Railway, which was to link up with the PGE near Prince George and eventually run to the Alaska border.²⁷ The Commissioner of the Yukon, F. H. Collins, noted that only one railway (the White Pass and Yukon) and one road (the Alaska Highway) formed the basis of the Yukon's transportation system, and future improvements in the Yukon would depend largely on the plans of Alaska and B.C. He suggested that the tourist industry and more extensive use of rail and air systems, as well as future petroleum developments, held the best hope for the Yukon's immediate economic future.²⁸

Because the conference was largely introductory in nature, the results were limited. An organizational committee to plan future sessions was established, as well as a technical committee charged with the investigation of all aspects of transportation in the region.²⁹ The conference adopted a resolution calling for a water highway (i.e. a ferry system) to connect Prince Rupert with Haines and Skagway, which would eventually connect with a B.C. ferry system from Prince Rupert south. The participants agreed to meet again, tentatively in Alaska in October 1960, to discuss "Problems of Northern Development".

The parties were better prepared to deal with specific subjects at the second A-BC-Y conference, in Juneau, Alaska, 20-21 July 1961. Both the Battelle study and the final report of the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission were available, so that closer scrutiny of specific projects was possible.³⁰ The most noticeable change among the partici-

²⁷ H. H. Minshall outlined the proposed route: the southern terminus would be at Summit Lake, where it would interchange with the PGE; the first stage of the line would be to the northern terminus at Happy Valley, on the Yukon border, following a route west of the Rocky Mountain Trench (which was the site of the U.S. Army survey in 1942), which was to be flooded by power development of the Peace River. Future plans for the railway were to pass through Whitehorse, en route to the Alaska border. The railway was never built, although a similar route has been followed by the PGE (BCR).

The purpose behind the PNR was to provide a link with the Yukon and Alaska, which was the original aim of the PGE. However, if the PGE crossed the B.C. border at any place, it would automatically come under federal jurisdiction, which would not be welcomed by the B.C. government. As a private railway, the PNR would come under federal control, but would provide a rail link with the north, which met the objectives of the provincial government, even though it was a second best solution. Interview with former Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources R. G. Williston, 24 December 1973.

²⁸ First Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 6-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10. The technical committee was headed by Ministers: Highways Minister Gaglardi for B.C., Public Works Commissioner Downing for Alaska, and a member to be named by the Yukon.

³⁰ Reactions of the local governments to the recommendations of the Battelle a

pants was in the position adopted by the British Columbia delegation, which stressed the need for outside financial assistance and questioned the value — to B.C. — of some of the possible joint programmes. Changed attitudes resulting from consideration of local priorities thus affected the future of the sessions.

Partly because of the research that had been done, partly because of bargaining strategy, the discussions were more pointed than they were in Victoria. Alaska's submission on transportation was made by Public Works Commissioner R. A. Downing, who noted that the Alaska State Ferry System had been founded to provide a marine highway which the previous conference had recommended. He called for joint tourist promotions and consideration of joint pipeline construction, and stressed the importance of two specific issues: the paving of the Alaska Highway in Canada and the need for federal financial assistance to construct the transportation links recommended by the Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission.³¹ British Columbia presented several briefs to the conference, and all revealed that the provincial government questioned the priority of the projects which had been discussed earlier. In summary, the B.C. position was that:

- (a) Paving the Alaska Highway was important, and would require federal assistance, but only the tourist industry would benefit.
- (b) The inter-connection of highways with Alaska was not presently justified by existing resource development, which determined B.C. expenditures of this nature.
- (c) The Battelle Commission report was over-optimistic about projecting increased tourism, which was not a sufficient justification for major expenditures.

Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission reflected the objectives of the conferences. Alaskan officials questioned the emphasis on the benefits of tourism, and the lack of attention to future resource development, as well as the defence needs of the region. "Summary of Reaction in United States to Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission Report", presented to A-BC-Y conference, Whitehorse, 14 September 1964 (Mimeo). British Columbia's reaction (which can be seen in the position adopted by the province in the 1961 conference, which is discussed in detail below) was that B.C. welcomed the proposals for a major improvement of the region's highway system, but the financial requirements for such an effort were beyond B.C.'s capabilities. Interview of R. W. Bonner, Attorney-General of B.C., *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 13 November 1961, p. 1. The Yukon's reaction — which was, in effect, the Canadian government's reaction — was that the reports had underestimated the region's potential resource wealth, while over-emphasizing the need for highway improvements. B. G. Sivertz, Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, Second Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes* (Juneau: 1961).

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

- (d) The Jones Act should be amended before B.C. entered any agreements to use Alaskan ports for B.C. products.
- (e) B.C. was willing to enter into joint tourist promotions of the type that already existed with Washington and Oregon.
- (f) B.C. was interested in consideration of joint pipeline projects.³²

The Yukon's principal brief was delivered by a Canadian federal government official, B. G. Sivertz, who noted that the federal government was emphasizing construction of resource-development roads; he suggested that the Battelle Commission had over-estimated the value of highways, while under-valuing the contributions of mineral wealth to the region's growth.³³

Thus while Alaska's representative expressed optimism for joint projects, B.C. began to bargain for outside financing (from either Canadian or U.S. sources) for projects which would benefit Alaska, and the Yukon remained passive. The concrete products of the second conference were few. A committee to study possible hydro-electric project co-operation — analogous to the transportation committee — was established, and the transportation committee was instructed to consider scheduling and priority of various inter-connections.³⁴ The next conference was set for Whitehorse in June 1962.

The third A-BC-Y conference was held in Whitehorse, 14-16 September 1964, fully two years later than scheduled. This was likely a result of the relative decline in enthusiasm for joint efforts which appeared at the second conference due to differences over priorities and financing. In spite of these problems, the parties were still interested in co-operation,

³² These points are a summary of points made by a number of speakers: Highways Minister Gaglardi, Recreation and Conservation Minister E. C. Westwood, Lands and Forests Minister Williston; *Ibid.*, pp. 9-15.

In a classic example of historical irony, Alaskan Governor Egan suggested that the parties should investigate joint pipeline development. B.C. Highways Minister Gaglardi endorsed the idea, noting that in: "... the event of war, it is obvious that Alaskan oil could not be moved by tanker with any degree of security, whereas, the movement of oil by pipeline in British Columbia offers the maximum degree of security.... (I) t might be expedient for Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to evolve joint pipeline systems." Second Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, "Working Papers of the Province of British Columbia", (Mimeo), IV, pp. 4-5. In light of subsequent concern in B.C. regarding the tanker in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, this proposal stands out as an example of an identification of a future concern, which, had it been pursued, might have greatly reduced the friction resulting from the TAPS plan.

³³ Second Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 13-15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22. Note that unlike the technical committee on transportation, the power committee was to be composed of officials, rather than elected representatives.

and still required federal government financing. As a result, the third conference featured efforts to find areas of consensus.

Subjects discussed at the third conference reflected the desire of the parties to seek out common ground; most speakers dealt with making informative reports, much in the style of the first session. Alaska's position can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Paving of the Alaska Highway was an immediate priority; development and joint promotion of the tourist industry should begin.
- (b) The Alaska International Rail and Highway Commission recommendation for a co-ordinated Merchant Marine could reduce shipping costs for the region, and deserved further consideration.
- (c) Alaska supported B.C.'s position on exporting hydro-electric power, which had influenced the shape of the Columbia River Treaty; Alaska sought joint hydro-electric projects with B.C.
- (d) Alaska was interested in reciprocal motor-vehicle licensing agreements with B.C. and the Yukon.³⁵

British Columbia's position revealed a more co-operative attitude than had been evident in Juneau, although the scope of the projects B.C. was prepared to discuss was limited:

- (a) The paving of the Alaska Highway should be undertaken as a "crash project".
- (b) Hydro-electric power was available in the region, and should be jointly planned by the parties, without recourse to the IJC.
- (c) Highway inter-connections with Alaska would require financial assistance from other sources, as B.C. priorities were elsewhere.
- (d) B.C. was prepared to enter reciprocal agreements on motor-vehicle licensing.³⁶

³⁵ The summary of Alaska's position is based on a condensation of points made by a number of speakers: Governor Egan, Natural Resources Commissioner Phil Holdsworth, Highways Commissioner Donald McKinnon, Administration Deputy Commissioner Robert Sharp. Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 2-11.

³⁶ B.C.'s position is a summary of points made by various speakers: Premier Bennett, Resources Minister Williston, Highways Minister Gagliardi, and others. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-12.

Reference to the IJC was in connection with discussion of a specific project which was under consideration. A private firm planned to dam the Iskut River and sell the power to the Panhandle communities of Petersburg and Wrangell, while constructing a road or railway from the B.C. interior to the Alaskan coast. Press reports at the time implied that the project had been approved, and the Alaskan and B.C. governments were seeking ways to subvert federal controls over power exports. *Vancouver Sun*, 16 September 1964, p. 7. One of the principals involved, however, denies that the project was ever more than a suggestion; interview with Williston, 24 December 1973.

The Yukon's presentation to the third conference was limited, perhaps because of the influence of the large group of Canadian federal government observers who attended the session. The Yukon called for:

- (a) Increased co-operation in tourist promotion.
- (b) Information exchanges to improve development incentives and to assist prospectors.
- (c) Construction of a road between Whitehorse, Carcross and the Alaskan port of Skagway.³⁷

In many respects, the third conference was similar to the first, when the parties exchanged ideas for future consideration.

This search for consensus produced little in the way of significant results. Two new committees were struck to consider reciprocal motor-vehicle licensing agreements and joint tourist promotions. The power committee which had been formed in 1961 (but which had apparently never met) was instructed to consider possible joint power projects.³⁸ The resolutions which were adopted reveal the degree to which the parties had been forced to return to basic issues:

- (a) Canada and the U.S. should commence immediate negotiations for joint financing to pave the Alaska Highway in Canada.
- (b) The Haines-Haines Junction road, a spur line of the Alaska Highway, should be improved and maintained on a year-round basis.

³⁷ The Yukon position is a summary of points made by various speakers: Commissioner G. R. Cameron; D. A. W. Judd, executive assistant to the commissioner; H. J. Taylor, Territorial Secretary. Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 3-13.

³⁸ The motor-vehicle and tourism committees were to be composed of officials. The tourist committee was to be permanent, but no meetings were held, and no joint promotions were made. Interview with R. L. Colby, Deputy Minister, B.C. Department of Travel Industry, 9 October 1973.

The power committee did not meet in the forum suggested by the 1964 conference. However, Alaska remained strongly interested in obtaining power for the Panhandle, and in 1967, Governor Hickel met with Premier Bennett and Resources Minister Williston to discuss possible projects, such as trading power from B.C. for access rights across the Panhandle. *Vancouver Sun*, 3 March 1967, p. 7. With the cancellation of the massive Ramparts power project in Alaska, a joint study group composed of Canadian, U.S., B.C. and Alaskan officials considered alternative projects for the region, based on the possible diversion of the Yukon River and the creation of a new inter-tie system which would link the whole Pacific coast (in effect, an electrical version of the NAWAPA project). The group's final report was presented in July 1970. Although it was not publicly released, the report apparently concluded that while the scheme was feasible, existing markets did not warrant such a massive development. Information supplied in interviews with Williston, 24 December 1973, V. Raudsepp, former Deputy Minister of Water Services, 17 December 1973, and B. E. Marr, Associate Deputy Minister of Water Services, B.C. Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, 16 January 1974.

- (c) Local resources should be utilized locally, not removed in raw form to benefit other regions. In particular, the governments were concerned about the NAWAPA proposal.³⁹

Thus rather than moving on to new subjects, or finalizing agreements on possible joint projects, the third conference was an exercise in consensus-building on "motherhood" issues. The effectiveness and utility of future meetings was thrown into doubt by conflicts of priority and disputes over financing projects which did not benefit all parties equally. The next conference was set for Victoria in June 1965, but was never called.

In concrete terms, the A-BC-Y conferences did not achieve accord on specific projects; interest in further sessions was rapidly dissipated. Changes in political leadership in Alaska (Governor Egan was replaced by Governor Hickel) marked the end of active pressures for future meetings, and within three years relations between B.C. and Alaska had altered radically.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, it is possible to indicate a number of products of the conferences, some of which can be seen in a positive vein, while others are more negative. Some of the positive results were these: (1) The meetings heightened a sense of "good will" among neighbouring jurisdictions. (2) Contacts between officials charged with planning future

³⁹ Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, pp. 13-15. The NAWAPA proposal was developed by a private engineering firm in the U.S.; it envisaged linking up the water resources of western North America as a means of supplying water to southern California. The idea was never officially endorsed by either the U.S. or Canadian governments, although it remains today as an element of Canadian nationalist concern, as a harbinger of "continentalism".

⁴⁰ B.C. spokesmen all stress the role that "good will" plays in making such conferences possible. All point to the change in political leadership in Alaska as explaining the end of the conferences. Interviews with former Premier W. A. C. Bennett, 12 December 1973, Williston, 24 December 1973, and Bonner, 25 February 1974.

Three years after the last meeting, a dispute between British Columbia and Alaska soured the "good will". Interestingly, the cause of the dispute had appeared during the earlier conferences. The B.C. Ferry "Queen of Prince Rupert", which linked Kelsey Bay (Vancouver Island) with Prince Rupert, and thus the Alaska State Ferry System, was damaged in August 1967 but not put back into service until the spring of 1968. Governor Hickel used the incident as proof of the need to have direct ties between Alaska and the mainland U.S., and announced that the Alaska State Ferry System would begin direct service with Washington State. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 28 November 1967, p. 1. Premier Bennett claimed he was delighted with the Alaskan decision, in spite of speculation in the press that the "Queen of Prince Rupert" had been held out of service in an attempt to force changes in the Jones Act. *Victoria Daily Times*, 30 November 1967, p. 25. As a result of the dispute, Hickel declared that Alaska-B.C. relations were at an all-time low: "Bennett didn't even answer my letters and telegrams when I asked about resumption of the Kelsey Bay run. He answered me in the newspapers, and nobody does that to me!" *Vancouver Sun*, 18 December 1967, p. 30. Bennett responded by noting that he never answers correspondence that has been released to the press. *Victoria Daily Times*, 20 December 1967, p. 1.

developments were created, thereby providing an invaluable source of information as an aid to local planning. (3) Some limited joint studies of power development projects were undertaken, which assisted local planning priorities. (4) Joint projects were planned by the local governments, though they were not initiated.⁴¹

Ironically, however, some of these positive results of the conference also serve to explain why the fourth session was never called: (1) The anticipated common interests were not as "common" as expected; perceived local requirements were given greater priority than perceived benefits resulting from joint projects.⁴² (2) The identification of competing interests reduced the "good will" which was produced initially among the local governments. (3) The significance of Alaska's change in political leadership cannot be underestimated, as it changed the personal relationships at senior levels, which so contributed to the establishment of the conferences. (4) Ultimately, the lack of local resources and authority ended the sessions; this was measured in terms of a lack of financial capability by the local governments, the lack of constitutional authority to enter into joint projects without federal governmental blessing, and the inability of the local governments to convince their respective federal governments to adopt the measures they sought. Of all the results noted, the last is the most significant and revealing.

As noted dramatically in the quotation which opened this paper, the central objective of the local governments in holding the conferences was to focus the attention of the Canadian and U.S. governments on the requirements of the region and to force federal support for the priorities

⁴¹ In this context, note the anticipated project on the Iskut River, which was discussed at the 1964 conference, and the joint review of possible hydro-electric development of the Yukon system, as discussed in footnote 38.

One positive benefit from the conference was the establishment of the Yukon Tourist Department, which apparently was given considerable advice and assistance by the existing Alaskan and B.C. departments. See Third Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon Conference, *Minutes*, p. 10.

⁴² For example, Alaska was not anxious to establish a "corridor" across the Panhandle, which suggested a land give-away, but was willing to consider some kind of access privilege for B.C. *Vancouver Sun*, 3 March 1967, p. 7. On this same issue, B.C. was interested in some kind of free port arrangements, which would overcome the restrictions imposed by the Jones Act, but the U.S. could not be expected to make an exception to national legislation on a regional basis. Interviews with Bennett, 12 December 1973, and Bonner, 25 February 1974.

In summary, Alaska and B.C. both wanted a scheme which would provide financing for a railway development; when this was not forthcoming, they sought secondary objectives. Alaska wanted joint highway development, and B.C. sought access to tidewater through the Panhandle, and changes to the Jones Act. Ultimately, the "price" for such co-operation was too high, and beyond the capabilities of the local governments.

of the local authorities. The parties were not seeking joint projects as much as they were seeking financial support. This was most evident at the third conference, when the resolutions adopted clearly set out a lowest-common-denominator kind of approach. One former B.C. cabinet minister candidly admitted the basic aim behind the conferences:

The really fundamental idea behind the conferences was that if you got so far along, almost to the point of embarrassment, where you were going to do certain things jointly that the national governments couldn't let you do any-way. . . . There was no way that we could do many of the things we were attempting to do, but we were attempting to establish a logic, to establish a means by which they could go forward, and leave the two national governments in the embarrassing position that they would pretty well have to endorse it.⁴³

Another former cabinet minister who was involved with the meetings readily admits that the local governments were well aware that very little in the way of province-state joint projects was ever possible.⁴⁴ Thus the basic objective of the local governments was to use the international sector as a means of providing leverage in domestic relations with the two national governments, and it is as well to see these A-BC-Y conferences as a study in domestic confrontations as much as an exercise in international activity by local governments.

Concluding Observations

As was noted at the outset, the significance of the three A-BC-Y conferences can be measured in a variety of ways—for example, in the context of the development plan that was being followed by the Bennett government, and thus as part of B.C.'s history; but also as an example of

⁴³ Interview with Williston, 24 December 1973. This interpretation was supported (though not so explicitly) by B.C. civil servants. One described the meetings as "bull sessions" that discussed grandiose schemes, without much attention to detail, which led to the conclusion that the parties were using the talks for a wider purpose, in trying to "scare" the federal governments. Interview with Ron Knight, Director of Statistics Branch, B.C. Department of Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce, 18 December 1973. Another official claimed that B.C.'s central objective was to find a way to build a railway to Alaska, and by reaching agreement with the state government, to present Ottawa with a "fait accompli". Interview with Maurice Glover, B.C. Department of Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce, 29 November 1973.

⁴⁴ "Provincial-State relations are pretty fragmentary at best. They occur under clouds of good will, rather than any particular sanctification. . . . Neither side has great capacity to deal with the other, and if any serious intent were to emerge, it would involve normal constitutional usage of federal activity on the part of both countries. Nothing got remotely close to that kind of activity." Interview with Bonner, 25 February 1974.

the expanding international interests and activities of Canadian provincial governments. With regard to the former, it is only possible to touch briefly on what the details of the conferences reveal. The latter significance, however, can be considered in greater detail, as the issues and interests discussed at the sessions can be seen to be representative of provincial government activity of this sort.

In the context of the significance of the conferences to British Columbia, it is possible to indicate a number of themes. First, Premier Bennett's efforts to obtain a railway link with the north dominated the province's presentations. As well, it is possible to see manifestations here of Bennett's oft-stated design to extend the northern border of B.C. to the Arctic Ocean. In this sense, the Bennett government was laying the groundwork for practical changes in territory which, if they had been made, would have required far more extensive interaction between B.C. and Alaska.⁴⁵ Second, B.C.'s willingness to operate independently in matters with the United States can be seen in the context of the province's involvement with the Columbia River Treaty, where the shape of the ultimate agreement was strongly influenced by the desires of the Bennett government.⁴⁶ It could be argued that, having successfully worked in the international sector in pursuit of provincial interests, it was worthwhile considering other ventures of this sort. Finally, the A-BC-Y conferences can be seen as the culmination of efforts between Alaska and B.C. to work in concert to develop transportation systems to serve their mutual interests. As noted earlier, studies of highway plans had been undertaken earlier in the century, although with the lack of success in 1964, decisions were made later which likely prevent further discussions of this type of project.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The former Premier claims that the desired extension of B.C.'s borders was the central purpose in his mind in holding the conferences. Interview with Bennett, 12 December 1973.

Bennett made several proposals regarding the idea of B.C. extending its boundaries. In 1959, he suggested that if part of the Northwest Territories were given to B.C., the province would take over full maintenance of the Alaska Highway. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 19 July 1959, p. 1. The most formal offer he made was at the 1964 conference in Whitehorse; he made a passing reference to a proposal that the Yukon join B.C. in his introductory remarks to the conference, but expanded on the suggestion to newsmen later. His proposal was that the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (to 120° W.) should join B.C., in exchange for a commitment by the province to provide a \$300 million transportation system for the area, involving: (a) paving the Alaska Highway; (b) paving the Stewart-Cassiar road; (c) extension of the PGE into the area. *Vancouver Sun*, 15 September 1964, p. 1.

⁴⁶ For details, see Neil A. Swainson, "The International Development of the Columbia River: A Study in Political and Administrative Behavior" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1973).

⁴⁷ Because of the establishment of projects, and changed policies, the type of joint pro-

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CONFERENCES

	ALASKA	BRITISH COLUMBIA	YUKON	U.S.A.	CANADA
ELECTED	Governor 1,2,3 Administration 3 Fish & Game 1,2 Natural Resources 1,2,3 Public Works 1,2,3	Premier 1,2,3 Agriculture 1 Commercial Transport 1,3 Education 1 Health 1 Highways 1,2,3 Lands, Forests & Water Resources 1,2,3 Mines & Petroleum Resources 1 Provincial Secretary 1,2,3 Public Works 1 Recreation & Conservation 1,2			
OFFICIALS	Commerce 2,3 Economic Planning 3 Fish & Game 3 Highways 3 Natural Resources 2 Public Works 2	Economics & Statistics 1,2,3 Ferry Authority 2 Highways 1,2,3 Motor-Vehicles 3 Provincial Secretary 1,2,3 Water Resources 3	Commissioner 1,2,3 Council Members 1,3 Council Staff 3 Territorial Engineer 2	Commerce 2,3 Interior 2,3 State 1,2,3 (Consul-General)	Citizenship & Immigration 3 Fisheries 3 Justice 3 Mines 3 Northern Affairs & Natural Resources 1,2,3 Public Works 3 Travel Bureau 2 Unemployment Insurance 3

With regard to the second area of significance — that of the international activity of provincial governments — the A-BC-Y conferences are more instructive. In the first place, they reveal graphically the kind of interests and issues which tend to draw Canadian provinces into international activities. By attending international meetings of this sort, departments of local governments reveal how certain constitutional responsibilities require attention to matters beyond local boundaries. Table 1 summarizes the involvement of various departments of the British Columbia government in the three A-BC-Y conferences.⁴⁸ A number of observations on this data can be made. The political leaders of the two main actors (Alaska and British Columbia) attended all three sessions, thereby pro-

ject which could be discussed has changed. For example, the NDP government is not anxious to enter into joint hydro-electric projects with Alaska, partially because of environmental concern, partially because of the "lesson" of the Columbia River Treaty experience. To prevent this, the government established the Atlin Lakes Provincial Park, forestalling hydro plans for the Yukon River. Hon. R. A. Williams, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, interviewed on CBC "Hourglass" television programme, 18 December 1973. In the same vein, the government's transport policy now focuses on Prince Rupert, and agreements with the Canadian government prohibit egress through the Alaska Panhandle, thus eliminating the concept of a "transportation corridor". Interview with Williams, 21 August 1974.

Notwithstanding the comments noted above, future meetings may be held, as the minister responsible for Northern Affairs, Alf Nunweiler, has announced that a "liaison on northern affairs" with Alaska and the Yukon may be established to be concerned with "social and economic development issues." News release from Nunweiler's office, 15 May 1975.

In addition to high-profile inter-governmental meetings, there are a number of informal "arrangements" affecting relations along the British Columbia-Alaska border. For example, the RCMP in Stewart provide an unofficial "presence" in the neighbouring town of Hyder, Alaska; as well, B.C. Hydro sells power to some Alaskan communities. For more details, see my dissertation, "British Columbia's Inter-Governmental Relations with the United States," Ch. II.

⁴⁸ Some explanation of the classification system is in order. Members of the Alaska cabinet are included under the "elected" category; this is not strictly accurate, although it is necessary to separate political appointments from civil service officials, and it should be noted that the responsibilities of a commissioner are essentially the same as those of a minister.

In the case of the B.C. cabinet, not all the portfolios represented at the conference have been mentioned. Many of the individuals held more than one portfolio; R. W. Bonner is a good example: he was both Attorney-General and Minister of Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce, and later Minister of Commercial Transport. The principle used to determine which B.C. departments were represented is first, the number of individuals (5 men = 5 departments), and the most appropriate department has been listed. In the example cited above, Bonner is listed as the Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce Minister, rather than Attorney-General.

The numbers indicate which of the conferences were attended; 1 was in 1960, 2 in 1961, 3 in 1964.

Each of the sessions was also well attended by private interests; this included individual firms as well as boards of trade and chambers of commerce. See footnote 24.

viding an official sanction for the meetings. Some ministers' attendance at the conferences can only be explained as taking place to enhance the "good will" of the session, as the functional responsibility of the individual in question (such as the Minister of Education) had little to do with the immediate issues at hand. Thus the effect of "good will" among neighbouring jurisdictions can be seen to create interactions among local governments at the political level. Finally, the regular attendance of specific departments reflected both the themes of the sessions and the kinds of subjects which draw provincial governments into international matters: transportation, resource management and industrial development.⁴⁹

It should be noted that British Columbia was not exceeding constitutional authority in discussing matters such as were outlined above. The provinces enjoy clear authority over these subjects, although the spirit of the BNA Act limits this authority to provincial boundaries. Ultimately, the significance of these meetings lies in the fact that B.C. was using authority in these areas to legitimize international activities, and in turn to utilize international factors to influence domestic affairs. This fact was perhaps evidenced by the growing attention to the conferences given by the Canadian government, as revealed by the large delegation of federal officials at the third conference.

The issues considered at the A-BC-Y meetings thus reveal the kinds of issues which produce provincial government interests in international affairs, and which may create future federal-provincial confrontations. To the factors which were identified here — "good will", transportation, resource management and industrial development — it is possible to add others: trade policy, environmental issues, energy, foreign aid, education and culture, to name only a few.⁵⁰ Contemporary examples of the applica-

⁴⁹ This issue is particularly relevant when considering the amount of involvement by the B.C. government, as the Bennett administration was notoriously frugal with travel funds. Numerous B.C. civil servants mentioned (though they requested anonymity) the fact that even senior departmental officials could not travel beyond the province without first obtaining approval from the Treasury Board, which was usually not forthcoming. (As well, the departments required approval of long-distance telephone calls in advance.) This fact, when coupled with observations of the number of officials who attended the conferences from B.C., suggests that the provincial government attached considerable importance to the meetings.

⁵⁰ The range of potential interests is as wide as the constitutional authority granted the provinces in section 92 of the BNA Act. Some recent examples of British Columbia's use of this authority which has involved the international arena include Economic Development Minister Gary Lauk's position paper regarding the GATT negotiations on international trade, *Vancouver Province*, 4 October 1974, p. 16, concern over the environmental effects of the TAPS system, which led to Premier Barrett's visit to Washington, D.C. to propose an alternative transportation system, *Vancouver Sun*, 14 March 1973, p. 1, as well as the province's limited foreign aid

tion of these interests can be seen in the efforts of the Maritime Premiers and New England Governors, who have established permanent machinery to deal with issues similar to those considered at the A-BC-Y meetings; in the same vein, a later British Columbia government has become involved with Washington State.⁵¹ Accordingly, the interests which led to B.C.'s involvement in the A-BC-Y conferences can be seen affecting other provinces, so that B.C.'s efforts are likely representative of other Canadian provincial governments.

The fact that the Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon conferences did not attain their objectives is of less importance than the fact that the meetings were held. That regional interests were seen as being essentially complementary and that the local governments sought to act in concert to provide leverage in domestic situations is of considerably greater significance. In lacking a clear division of constitutional authority over international matters, the BNA Act provides the makings of future federal-provincial confrontations, particularly with regard to Canadian-American relations. As the provinces enjoy constitutional authority over matters which have international implications, they may be anticipated to apply this authority increasingly in the future. The Alaska-British Columbia-Yukon conferences are thus instructive about the Bennett years and also a likely harbinger of future events.

programme; interview with L. J. Wallace, Deputy Provincial Secretary, 6 September 1973. The international activities of the Quebec government are replete with examples of issues relating to educational and cultural subjects.

⁵¹ The first meeting of the Premiers of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Quebec and the Governors of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island and New Hampshire established two committees, to investigate trade, transport and development policies as well as energy matters. *Canadian News Facts* (Toronto: Marpep Publications), August 16-31 1973, p. 1065.

Premier Dave Barrett and Governor Dan Evans of Washington State organized a two-day symposium for legislators in Bellingham during September 1974. Subsequently, the Washington State Legislature created a committee to deal with Canadian-American relations; *Vancouver Sun*, 13 January 1975, p. 52.

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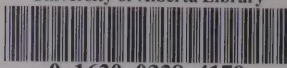
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